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SUBJECT: ATTACK ON US EMBASSY IN SYRIA; THE US AND THE WAR IN IRAQ;
US-BOLIVIA; VENEZUELA'S STATEMENTS ON LATIN AMERICA AND PRESIDENT
KIRCHNER; NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT; 09/13/06;BUENOS AIRES

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

All local newspapers report on the criminal attack on the US Embassy in Damascus. Other international stories include Democrats' assertions that US President Bush used a day of mourning to defend the war in Iraq; Bolivian Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera's negotiations in Washington to extend the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act; Arturo Valenzuela's statements about Latin America and President Kirchner; and the Non-Aligned Countries' varied positions on US policies.

2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "Foiled attack on US Embassy in Syria"

Liberal, English-language "Buenos Aires Herald" front-pages (09/13)
"Suspected al Qaeda-linked militants yesterday tried to blow up the US Embassy in Damascus and storm it with automatic weapons and hand grenades, but they were repulsed outside the walls by Syrian guards in a fierce gun battle.

"The brazen, midmorning attack came amid high tension between the US and Damascus and could highlight the Syrian regime's weakening grip on militants, who have battled Syrian security forces several times in recent years.

"Three attackers and a Syrian guard were killed in the attempted bombing in a heavily guarded neighborhood of Damascus where several foreign embassies and President Bashar Assad's office and residence are located. No US citizens were hurt.

"... 'I do think that the Syrians reacted to this attack in a way that helped to secure our people, and we very much appreciate that,' Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said.

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"... But Syria responded with a sharp criticism of the US, blaming its policies in Lebanon, Iraq and the Palestinian territories for increasing Islamic militancy.

"'It is regrettable that US policies in the Middle East have fuelled extremism, terrorism and anti-US sentiment,' the Syrian Embassy in Washington said in a statement. 'The US should... start looking at the root causes of terrorism and broker a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.'"

- "Warnings"

Marcelo Cantelmi, international editor of leading "Clarín," opines

(09/13) "The precarious nature of the criminal attack on Syria seems to point to an isolated group in spite of Damascus' interest to blame Al Qaeda... These isolated groups are perhaps the most disturbing feature of the chaos of violence, which is fed by the rage over the crisis in the Middle East.

"In early 2005, Jordan King Abdallah II, a clear ally of Washington, warned that the characteristic Muslim animosity against the US was turning into hatred of the US people because of big mistakes made by the US in the region. The risk is that these kinds of warnings remain neglected."

- "Bush is criticized for defending the war in Iraq"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" reports (09/13) "US President George W. Bush's speech on the fifth anniversary of the September 11 attacks unleashed controversy in Washington. The Democratic opposition accused the US President of having used a day of mourning for political purposes to defend the decreasingly popular war in Iraq.

"According to opponents, Bush invoked the memory of casualties to justify keeping US troops in the Arab country. The White House rejected these charges and said that Bush avoided partisan statements in his speech although he could not help making some reference to Iraq.

"The fifth anniversary of 9/11 took place two months before November legislative elections now that Bush has embarked on an aggressive campaign to defend his administration, and particularly the global war on terrorism, which is being criticized by the Democratic opposition.

"For its part, the opposition, which wants to remove Republican control of both chambers of Congress, is also in a full steam campaign and has used the war in Iraq to state that a change on Capitol Hill is badly needed."

- "Evo seeks to retain US trade preferential rates"

Business-financial "El Cronista" (09/13) reports "Bolivian Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera continued his attempts in Washington to obtain the extension of the trade preferential program whereby Bolivia exports 200 million dollars, more than half of its annual exports to the US. What is at stake is 80,000 jobs plus another 90 million dollars per year, which Washington provides Bolivia to help it eradicate coca crops. The name of the program is the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act...

"Yesterday, Garcia Linera met with DUSTR Everett Eissenstat and IDB head, Colombian Luis Alberto Moreno. Garcia Linera said he was 'moderately optimistic' that the US would renew preferential rates for Bolivia because the country is making efforts to stop being the third largest coca producer in the world."

- "'The fact that Kirchner implements the policy of a 'caudillo' is dangerous'"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" front-pages (09/13) "... Arturo Valenzuela, Deputy Assistant Secretary at the US Department of State during the first Clinton administration, special consultant to the White House on National Security Issues, and Director of the Western Hemisphere Section at the National Security Council during the second Clinton administration, said 'The ideal thing would be democracy according to Abraham Lincoln's view - the government of the people, by the people and for the people... The majority often does not respect minorities and sometimes is determined to change the rules of the game. It is determined, according to Evo Morales and Hugo Chavez's statements, to 're-establish' countries. 'In these cases, we are not speaking of democracy but aberration.'

"... Valenzuela added that 'Nestor Kirchner's 'caudillo policy' is risky.'

"... Regarding Chavez, Valenzuela said 'Chavez distorts Mercosur's potential a lot. I believe he represents a move backwards for (Mercosur) interests...'

"On Latin America's low importance for the US agenda, Valenzuela answered 'The US does not see Latin America strategically. Right now, the international agenda is dominated by Iraq, Iran and the Middle East. Mistakes were made in handling the OAS, Venezuela, Argentina... Neglect contributed to this disorder.'"

- "Non Aligned countries are divided on their position about Bush"

Business-financial "Ambito Financiero" reports (09/13)d "Yesterday, the Non-Aligned Movement, which Cuba seeks to re-launch in order to confront the US, tried to downplay the critical tone of its final statement in order to prevent its members from being intimidated.

"Government representatives from the 116 countries making up the bloc have issued a draft document, which was promoted by Cuba, in which they criticized the policies implemented by the US and its allies.

"According to one of the points of the draft statement, 'the heads of State strongly rejected Israel's ruthless attack on Lebanon.'

"Nonetheless, the group is made up of countries having different positions vis-`-vis Washington. On the one hand, there are strong critics, such as Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Iran and Syria. On the other hand, countries like India, Pakistan or Colombia, which have good ties with the US, do not want too strong a statement.

"... According to the draft statement, countries reject the toughening of the US embargo on Cuba and are concerned about its 'aggressive policies' against Cuba."

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